

Testimony before the  
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Mr. Chairman, Members of the Commission:

Thank you for inviting me here today to discuss China's internal information controls – on the Internet and other media – as well as to share my perception of what is happening inside China.

Because I believe all of China's individual policies, including those related to the media, are driven by the way the Party and its leaders assess China's overall situation, let me start with an overall assessment, then drill down to media controls, and finally offer several recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

## **Overview**

There are three main features to the overall landscape in China today. The first is the tension that the leadership feels in, on the one hand, moving forward as fast as possible while, on the other, going as slow as possible to avoid spills, like a Tour de France rider who brakes for curves and puddles. We mustn't forget that not long ago the people of China were eating leaves and grass. I am certain the leaders imagine worse catastrophes befalling China if they don't correctly manage the 'go-fast; no; go-slow' tension. The challenges the leadership face in supporting rapid change range from dismantling state owned enterprises and containing corruption to meeting energy, food and medicine needs of their people and rapidly developing the institutions and policies needed to run a booming country, including being able to guarantee purity of food exports. This is surely difficult in a society that is not under rule of law. Meanwhile the taste of economic success along with a rising sense of national pride force the government to support rapid progress. So far the government has responded by reducing policy bias towards big cities

by supporting rural development, health, education and the environment. There are at least 50 major implications for the United States in this aspect of China's situation: consumer product safety, the value of the RMB, our trade imbalance, and China's burgeoning investment in American stocks and bonds, to name but a few.

The second feature is looming on China's horizon: The 17<sup>th</sup> Party Congress this fall will select the "Fifth Generation" of China's leaders. In fact sixteen percent of China's senior leaders will retire and the Fifth Generation will have a clear shot at new domestic and foreign policies. The main implications here for the United States are whether the Party will begin to address domestic political reform or not and how, if at all, China will change its international agenda.

The third feature is the success China has had under Hu Jintao in preserving the dictatorship of the proletariat while building China's military strength, advancing the economy, and consolidating China's position as a leader of the international community. This success, although far from total, is large enough to permit China's neighbors, allies and adversaries to see the inevitability of China becoming a world superpower with an economy and a military robust enough to challenge the United States and anyone else. If the world's other totalitarian capitalist society, Russia, continues down the same path, the world could be a different place 25 years from now. Will China still be with us in the war on terrorism? Will human rights mean more then if total control is still seen as the secret to success? I do not have the answers, but the questions make me shiver.

### ***Media Controls***

Speaking of controls, the last five years have seen a tremendous tightening of controls over both domestic and international press. Gone are sophisticates like Wang Daohan and Zhao Qizheng; in their places are officials who are less sophisticated and who cling to the idea that anything that preserves stability is good and anything that interferes with stability is bad. Fortunately, not all Chinese agree with this paradigm. If any of you have not read Beijing Media Studies Professor Jiao Guobiao's "Declaration of the Campaign Against the Central Propaganda Department", I commend it to you and call your attention to this paragraph:

*Based upon the Central Propaganda Department's "Stability above all," we ask whose stability overrides all else? Whenever the Central Propaganda Department puts a stop order on a news story, we see that it is the stability of the corrupt elements which overrides all else. It is the stability of the people who oppress little people which overrides all else. It is stability of the people who pay off the Central Propaganda Department which overrides all else. It is the stability of the sub-contractor boss who does not pay his workers which overrides all else. It is the stability of the people who forced the poor downtrodden people to travel thousands of miles to file petitions which overrides all else.*

From Jiao's essays and from the Committee to Protect Journalists, that ranked China 159 out of 167 in its last world press freedom index, it is easy to conclude China is one of the

worst countries in the world for journalists. But visitors to China report world class investigative reporting, unbelievable variety and openness as well as state of the art chicness. What is going on? In fact, the situation to me seems relatively clear cut: journalists may 'do and say whatever they want, just don't cross the line'. If they ask where the line is, they are told nothing; cross it and they learn that in China everything is forbidden, even if it's allowed. Chinese media regulations are vague enough to allow authorities to jail journalists for anything a security officer defines as endangering national security. Only hindsight derived from case studies of dissidents in jail gives sufficient clues for reliable prediction of what will cause trouble: for sure, don't discuss Taiwan, Tibet or the Falungong – unless it's strictly along Party lines; otherwise, just don't challenge the Party or the State, meet with others to organize, or look abroad for political inspiration. If you can live within those guidelines, you'll be safe. Of course you won't be a real journalist, but you can still print newspapers, get press credentials and go on the air with newscasts. In other words, you can be a journalist who sometimes tells the truth.

Nowhere are the effects of the tightening of media controls more apparent than in the treatment China affords the Voice of America, much to the detriment of the interests of the United States, for it is our job to present U.S. policy and discussion of that policy.

But China is determined to keep the dialog one-sided. One recent example is the controversy over consumer products traded between the two countries. China's official media have reported in great detail certain aspects of the manufacture and, in some cases, recalls of tainted products. These Chinese reports have included the official media blaming international media, in particular U.S. media, for demonizing China by focusing reportage on tainted pet food, toothpaste and other products or their raw materials that originated from China. China's official reaction went from denial, to limited acceptance, to execution of an official, and finally to blaming American media. VOA Mandarin television and radio programs responded by providing extensive coverage of each case with analysis by U.S. officials and experts, including China's official reactions. We aired literally dozens of reports including interviews of Food and Drug Administration officials, talks with experts who explained why American consumers were concerned, live call-ins with Chinese asking whatever question they wanted – uncensored of course, discussions of the legal ramifications for U.S. importers and their Chinese counterparts, and unbiased explorations of whether American media were anti-China or not.

VOA has no position on any of these issues, but we have facilitated interaction between our Chinese audience, U.S. officials and international experts so that our listeners better understand the issues.

- On June 14 we aired a program called Uncut News on the food safety crisis. The format of Uncut News is to take a Chinese news report and compare it to the way the same story is covered in media outside China. In this case we compared the way Xinhua, China Daily, People's Daily and China Economic Daily were running the story to how the Wall Street Journal, the New York Times and the Straits Times of Singapore were covering the same story.

- On June 11 we invited the assistant commissioner of the FDA to be our guest on our daily one hour TV/radio call-in show. The switchboard lit up and calls poured in from all over China as this US government official explained the FDA's actions. It was clear from his presentation that the United States was not treating China any differently than manufacturers in the US or any other country, for that matter.
- Over the past few months the VOA newsroom and VOA's Mandarin Service have done dozens of stories from a wide variety of angles, including a four part series for radio and television on (1) food safety and the globalization of food production; (2) Agro-terrorism; (3) food labeling and (4) China's efforts to improve food safety.

Apart from the food and medicine controversy, China is does not want us to get through on other topics either, no matter how benign or hard-hitting they might be. If it's VOA, China does not want us to get through.

- They jam our shortwave broadcasts and bar our cooperation with local FM stations. In one glaring instance not long ago, we had arranged with a provincial radio station to coproduce a program on how Americans celebrate Lunar New Year. We brought several students from that province to Washington; the provincial station invited a few Americans into their studio; and we were all set to celebrate together on air when suddenly, only six hours before air time, the station called to say security officials had told them to drop the program.
- For many years we've attended radio and TV festivals in China, often putting up booths to show off our programming. The last time we succeeded in doing this, back in 2004, the exhibition organizers had to surround our booth with 17 security guards to control the crowds. Then suddenly our applications began being accepted and then rejected with no explanation. At this writing our application to attend the Beijing TV festival in August has been accepted and then rejected. We are appealing.
- We have produced over 300 TV programs called Cultural Odyssey that tell America's story. This is a weekly 30-minute show that stations we send to stations in China who strip off our identifiers and do whatever else is needed to hide us as their source before airing our program. The most recent episode carried stories of an American who uses rap to teach classical poetry, a tour of the Live Earth concerts, a review of the movie *Nanking*, and a report on the real Harry Potter getting his handprints in the cement outside Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles. But when Phoenix TV tried to air Cultural Odyssey, China told them they would lose their right to air in China if they did it again. They have threatened other stations caught cooperating with us as well.
- In the last year we've produced a one hour special for television on the ways American soldiers cooperated and fought side by side with China against Japan in WWII and another program on the impact the National Committee on US-China Relations has had on Sino-American relations over the last 40 years. We profiled many prominent Americans (Senators, Ambassadors, CEOs, etc.) and many prominent Chinese in that special program.

All of these programs, and others, are devoid of political content but China wants none of them shown. The leadership considers VOA to be “subversive” because we dare to provide an uncensored alternative to China’s state-run media.

Let me now get to the point: it is in the interest of the United States that the people of China understand America and vice versa. But there can be no mutual understanding if the communication is primarily one-way. On the one hand China has taken advantage of America’s open door to get its propaganda into the U.S. while on the other it does everything it can to bar the door against our uncensored information. China’s government clearly believes this one-way flow of information is good for its people; I suggest that it is bad for the people of the United States and we need to do something about it.

### ***Recommendations***

What can be done to turn the situation around? VOA has used whatever leverage we can find to persuade the Chinese to open up. A little bit of leverage helped us a few years ago to get a native Chinese-speaking correspondent stationed in our bureau in Beijing. But since then the Chinese have been less and less receptive to overtures from VOA. Members of the Broadcasting Board of Governors visit China regularly; each time they ask to visit key offices such as the Foreign Ministry, the State Council Information Office and the State Administration for Radio and Television. The last time one of our Governors visited Beijing he had a specific programming proposal to discuss with SARFT; unfortunately no one from SARFT could find time to meet him even though China that same week was playing host to an international conference of broadcasters attended by both VOA and RFA. How ironic that only last month VOA received a request from SARFT officials to visit our facilities in Washington. We of course agreed and will use the opportunity to ask for reciprocity.

Having mentioned reciprocity, let my first recommendation be that this word become the litmus test for all future access by China’s state sponsored media. Reciprocity is not an issue of freedom of the press; we are not afraid of China’s message. Instead, this is an issue of unfair market access. Government-sponsored Chinese media have unfettered access to the U.S.; they are increasingly skillful at taking every advantage of our open system to get Beijing’s message across; and their effort is growing; China Central TV news is now available in many American homes; they have dozens if not many more correspondents in the U.S. putting their official view on events that happen here; their reporters are free to travel wherever they want in the U.S. and they can talk to whomever they please without prior permission. If this is the kind of access that China wants to our media market, we must insist on reciprocity.

My second recommendation is to seek high-level representation on the issue of reciprocity. China has never agreed to discuss access of American media to Chinese markets with our highest officials. Britain’s prime and foreign ministers in their interaction with Beijing, to some avail, are often able to mention the BBC’s situation. But we believe the Chinese will not take us seriously unless and until China and the U.S.

discuss this issue at the highest level. In China, nothing gets done unless the people in the center at the top of the power heap say so.

A third recommendation, also related to reciprocity, is to ask for assistance in defining what leverage, if any, we might have to exert as we insist on fair and equal market access. To the extent that we can find statutes and regulations that are already part of the American system, we will strengthen our case that this is not aimed at China or China's message but merely an attempt to realize for VOA – and other American media – the same kind of market access that China already enjoys.

Thank you.